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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A method of preparing vegetable matter for inclusion in commercial packeted pet food, which includes the steps of:
 - treating the vegetable material with sodium metabisulfite;
 - dehydrating the vegetable matter, such that its relative water activity is lower than about 0.40;
 - coating the treated vegetable matter with humectant material;
 - wherein said humectant material is selected from a group consisting of: a mixture of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol; a mixture of vegetable oil, glucose and glycerol; animal tallow.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the humectant is animal tallow.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said animal tallow is added to said vegetable matter at a rate sufficient to make up between 1% by mass and 10% by mass of said coated vegetable material.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein said animal tallow is added to said vegetable matter at a rate sufficient to make up between 4% by mass and 8% by mass of said coated vegetable material.
5. The method of ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 1, wherein the animal tallow is derived from beef and/or from poultry.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said humectant material comprises a mixture of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the relative proportion of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol in said mixture is approximately 1:1:1.
8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the mixture of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol is added to said vegetable matter at a rate sufficient to make up between 1% and 10% by mass of said coated vegetable material.
9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the mixture of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol is added to said vegetable matter at a rate sufficient to make up between 3% and 5% by mass of said coated vegetable material.
10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said humectant material comprises a mixture of sorbitol, glucose and vegetable oil.
11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the relative proportion of sorbitol, glucose and vegetable oil in said mixture is approximately 1:1:1.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the mixture of sorbitol, glucose and vegetable oil is added to said vegetable matter at a rate sufficient to make up between 1% and 10% by mass of said coated vegetable material.
13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the mixture of sorbitol, glucose and vegetable oil is added to said vegetable matter at a rate sufficient to make up between 3% and 5% by mass of said coated vegetable material.
14. (Currently amended) The method of ~~any of claims 10 to 13~~, wherein said vegetable oil is sunflower oil.

15. (Currently amended) The method of ~~any preceding claim~~ 1, wherein said vegetable matter consists of one or more items selected from the group comprising carrots, green beans, peas, pumpkin, cabbage, and tubers.
16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said vegetable matter is a blend of diced carrots and diced green beans.
17. (Currently amended) Vegetable matter, for inclusion in a commercial packeted pet food, prepared via a method ~~according to any preceding claim~~ comprising the steps of:
treating vegetable material with sodium metabisulfite;
dehydrating the vegetable matter, such that its relative water activity is lower than about 0.40;
coating the treated vegetable matter with humectant material, said humectant material is selected from a group consisting of: a mixture of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol; a mixture of vegetable oil, glucose and glycerol; animal tallow
wherein the vegetable matter is produced for inclusion in a commercial packeted pet food.
18. (Currently amended) A commercial packeted pet food, including vegetable matter prepared via a method ~~according to any preceding claim~~ comprising the steps of:
treating the vegetable material with sodium metabisulfite;
dehydrating the vegetable matter, such that its relative water activity is lower than about 0.40;
coating the treated vegetable matter with humectant material, said humectant material is selected from a group consisting of: a mixture of sorbitol, glucose and glycerol; a mixture of vegetable oil, glucose and glycerol; animal tallow;
wherein a commercial packeted pet food that includes vegetable matter is produced.